

FREE



The Campaign for Real Ale

HERTFORDSHIRE NEWSLETTER

MAY 1981

CIRCULATION 4500

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HALFWAY THERE!

A recent survey among CAMRA branches of pubs gained and lost to real ale has shown that now over 50% are offering traditional draught beer. Last year nearly 4000 pubs changed over, whereas only 830 were 'lost' through either closure, demolition or landlords taking the beer out. The brewers that have done most to bring about the massive changes in the last year are Whitbread, with 470 conversions, and Allied Breweries (Ind Coope), with 320 new outlets. Our local brewer, McMullens, were in the top 5 of the smaller companies whose pubs have had handpumps installed.

Losses

On the debit side the 'worst' brewer was Bass who chalked up over 110 pubs where real ale had been withdrawn (see 'no relief for Bass' on page 2). However, one of the biggest reasons for the loss of pubs is closure and demolition. Over 300 pubs went because of these two reasons last year. Also on the debit side is the fact that almost 50% of pubs *don't* sell real ale. CAMRA will be trying to do something about those in the coming ten years!

QUICK ONES

NOT BUDGING

Following the bad news in the recent budget bringing price rises all round, one pub at least has decided it's had enough. The landlord of the Star, a Greene King house in Standon, has decided to absorb the current round of government-imposed increases. As long as his customers support him by drinking the stuff, and hence enabling him to make ends meet, he'll continue to keep his prices down. Now that sounds like a pretty fair deal . . .

SMOKELESS ZONES

After the success of a couple of ventures in no-smoking pubs, one of which is in Enfield, the Red Lion, Water End, near Hemel, has experimented with its own smoke-free bar. After a month of ashtrays in the public and none in the saloon, the feature is to stay. "It hasn't increased trade, but it certainly hasn't reduced it either", the landlady told the newsletter. "However, the saloon bar is now a lot easier to keep clean", she went on, "and we are offering the choice". Something which very few pubs do, and something which the newsletter wholeheartedly commends. "I'd definitely recommend the idea to other pubs", she said, and added, "even the flowers stay alive longer".

And so, I would imagine, do a few of the customers.

Continued on next page



DURHAM, overlooked by its magnificent Norman Cathedral, was the venue for the Campaign's National Annual General Meeting in March. For a full report see page 2.

BENARY MEUSKINS – PART 2



During a trip by Herts South Branch to Ind Coope's Romford brewery last month the Company expressed concern over the impression given by an article in the last edition of the newsletter. Head Brewer, David Priestley, pointed out that the practice of "party gyling", producing more than one beer from the same basic ingredients, is common practice in the brewing industry. Marketing Manager of Benskins in Watford, John Cavey, was a little distressed that we might be giving the public the idea that the company was trying to con them. "Nothing could be further from the truth", he said: "We have tried as hard as we can to produce the kind of beers that CAMRA would like to see". Both he and David Priestley pointed out that the practice of producing two or three different beers from the same mash is used by many other traditional brewers such as Ridleys, whose dark mild and bitter are essentially the same brew. "What really matters is the final product, and how it tastes", added Priestley.

The main characteristics of the original beers produced in the brewery, that they have tried to recapture are as follows:

Benskins – a dry hoppy bite reminiscent of the original.

Friary Mieux – a dry hoppy beer in which they use Styrian hops (a continental variety) to achieve the right effect.

Taylor Walker – a much darker, less bitter beer than the others, common characteristics of central London brews. Dark malts and some caramel are used.

Benskins as yet has received very little in the way of promotion, although that is about to change with the introduction of posters and the like. But, I understand, no TV advertising. While I realise that this is expensive, it hasn't stopped them using this to promote John Bull bitter, which is a far inferior product compared to Benskins, Taylor Walker or Friary Mieux. Quite obviously these beers are good enough to advertise themselves, so why waste time and money on John Bull? Isn't the whole idea of trying to push something that people just don't want how the keg revolution started in the first place?

Our thanks go to Ind Coope-Benskins for a very informative visit and some excellent ale at the end.

TOMORROW'S WORT

I always try to watch the BBC programme, Tomorrow's World, in order to keep up-to-date with modern technology and the microchip revolution. Now, though, my faith has been shattered. Michael Rodd, star of Space Shuttle and friend of James Burke, pronounced in a recent edition that beer, as everyone knows, is produced from fermented hops! Just wait till the brewers get hold of that one. They've been putting malt in for all these years, and it's been the hops that've been fermenting all along. What a waste! I think I'll go back to my Ladybird book of General Knowledge.

A DRY WHITE WINE PLEASE . . .

Ah, they are so clever these orientals. The latest idea from Japan is powdered alcohol. Just add water (and, I wouldn't mind betting, alcohol too) and you have instant gin, rum, brandy or wine. As the powder resembles heroin customs officials fear that people may take advantage. How suspicious can you get? Consequently, they think that they may need to have jugs of water stationed by them in order to check - any excuse for a quick one.

Experts say that the finished article is just like the real thing in colour and aroma, but the taste is a little marred by added dextrin. Fortunately, they haven't produced beer like this yet, and let's hope no-one tries.

ANNIVERSARY YEAR '81

Preparations for the joint CAMRA-LVA celebrations of their respective anniversaries are now well advanced. The event, which takes place between 5th and 11th July, in and around St Albans is hoped to raise a large sum of money for charity. Closing date for entries to the darts competition is May 13th, so make sure your pub or club fields a team. Entry is only £3 per team and the winners will receive the new Benskins Brewery Trophy, specially donated by them for the event. It is hoped that the competition will then become a yearly affair. Winners and runners-up will also receive medals. Anyone interested should contact Eric Allen, landlord of the Abbot John, Wheathampstead, or the newsletter.

Helpers will be needed through the week to man the various events, in particular the charity football match on the Sunday and setting-up beer on the Thursday for Saturday evening's event. People are also needed to liaise between the organisers and the various participating pubs during the week. Any CAMRA members willing to spare some time should contact Steve Bury on Radlett 3106 (home number).

MEMBERSHIP

There's never been a better, or a more important, time to join the Campaign for Real Ale. The subscription is just £7 per year - around the price of one pint each month for the year. For that you get to join "Europe's most successful consumer organisation", you receive What's Brewing, the Campaign's lively monthly newspaper; discounts on CAMRA products (the Good Beer Guide alone is £1 cheaper to members); and you get to take part in the many activities run by local branches - socials, beer festivals, campaigns and the like.

Now in its tenth year, if we are to maintain the achievements of the previous decade, CAMRA needs to be stronger than ever. It is now the only organisation which speaks for the pub user. Help to protect good British beer in good British pubs. **JOIN CAMRA NOW!**

Fill in the form below and send to: The Membership Secretary, CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 3BR. If you wish to pay by standing order please insert the name of your bank and account number. Otherwise simply fill in your name and address.



I/We wish to become members of the Campaign for Real Ale (Limited).
I/We agree to abide by the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Campaign.

To (your bank)
Please forward to Barclays Bank Limited, 3 High Street, St Albans (20-74-09) for the credit of CAMRA Ltd., (Subscription Account) No. 50187887, now the sum of £7 and annually on this date until further notice.

Name
Address
Bank a/c number
Bank address
Signed Date

The Hertfordshire Newsletter

Membership fee up

CAMRA's income dropped dramatically last year as a result of a number of factors, not the least of which was the recession. A slump in the book trade hit Good Beer Guide sales, although 70,000 copies were still sold. It is now costing CAMRA around £8 to service each member and the National Executive put forward a motion to increase the membership fee to recognise the fact. After much debate the meeting carried an increase to £7 per year for all classes of membership (£10 for overseas). **For full details of CAMRA membership see below.**

Lager attack

A motion was carried urging the implementation of another (actually passed at the 1980 AGM) which called for a concerted campaign against processed lager. Consequently the National Executive is to mount such a campaign, aimed mainly at 18-to-25-year-olds, which will draw their attention to the "true facts" about "weak, overpriced" lager products.

Taking on Courage

Specific campaigns are to be mounted to save the remaining real breweries in the Courage/John Smith's group. The recent closure of the Reading and London breweries, despite assurances from the Company, points to the fact that the futures of Bristol, Plymouth and Newark may also be in question now that the new Worton Grange megakegery is open. If these breweries were to go it would leave the Courage group with no traditional beer production capacity at all. Their John Smith's plant produces only processed beers, despite advertising which may suggest otherwise (see below).

Not so traditional

CAMRA's Executive is to start a campaign against the current rash of advertising campaigns which aim to give keg and processed beers a traditional image. In the south John Smiths and Wilsons and Stones are using this approach and there is little doubt that they are hoping to cash in on the traditional beer boom. Unfortunately, the products that they are promoting are definitely "unreal" and CAMRA is hoping to put a stop to this sort of blatant misrepresentation.



No relief for Bass

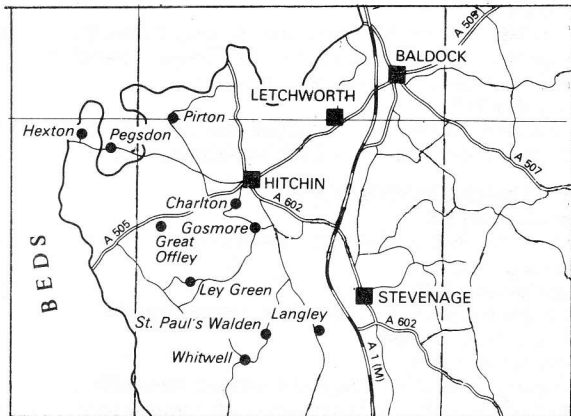
Bass, Britain's biggest brewer, will soon be getting some stick from the Campaign if they don't change their ways. Tim Webb, CAMRA's liaison officer for the Bass group, told of his growing concern over their activities. Despite their claim to be the biggest producers of traditional beer in Western Europe, this may soon change as they are following a policy of removing it from many of their pubs. Some of the beers the Company produces, such as Worthington bitter and Crown, are under threat and their famous Burton Union brewing system, which is used to brew both Bass and Worthington White Shield, is scheduled for closure. The end of the Burton Union system would almost certainly mean the end of these two beers as we know them. At a time when Ind Coope and even Watneys are trying hard to produce a good range of traditional products, Bass appear to be oblivious of the new realisation that big isn't all that beautiful. Watch this space for more news on CAMRA's national Bass campaign.

Publications

Sales of CAMRA's new What's Brewing quarterly magazine have been promising, especially considering its virtual absence of promotion. However financial difficulties made it look as though they were going to put an end to it. Luckily EMAP, an East Midlands publishing and printing group have come to the rescue and have offered a new deal to produce the magazine on a two-monthly basis. Not only is this good news for readers but the Campaign also stands to make more from it. Look for future editions in your local newsagents and bookshops.

Despite problems with the current slump in the book trade sales of the Good Beer Guide have been good and look encouraging for this year with CAMRA itself clearing over 20,000 copies of the 1981 edition so far. Plans for next year's edition are now being formulated and there was some discussion at the AGM about how the new guide should look. The public reaction has been to ask for more information about each pub (which would mean fewer entries), while CAMRA branches have asked for the number of pubs to be maintained at the expense of more interesting descriptions. If you have any views on the subject please write to the Editor, Roger Protz, at CAMRA, 34 Alma Road, St Albans.

GOLD CAN BE FOUND IN THE NORTH WEST TERRITORIES



For an area bounded on the east by Stevenage and Hitchin, and on the west by Luton, with the constant noise of jets flying overhead, the north west corner of Hertfordshire is amazingly rural and unpopulated.

The network of lanes that criss-cross the area also hide a surprising number of unspoilt country pubs, more and more of which are selling real ale.

A good place to start a tour of the north west territories is on the B656 Hitchin to Codicote road. Turn off just before Langley, on to the B651, which will take you to the 19th-century Strathmore Arms at St Paul's Walden.

This is the Queen Mother's local, for Her Majesty spent her childhood nearby at St Paul's Walden Bury, and the arms depicted on the innsign are those of her family, the Bowes-Lyons. This friendly and comfortable little pub serves Adnams Bitter on handpump, and Adnam's Old from a cask on the bar in winter. The local farmers who use the pub, apparently, like to take their Old with a measure of port mixed in – not recommended for anyone wanting to drive back.

Down the road and turn right, and you are in the village of Whitwell, pronounced Wittle. Only one of Whitwell's three surviving pubs sells real ale, the Maiden's Head, where handpumped McMullen's Country and AK is available in both bars. The innsign to this 200-year-old pub is on the opposite side of the road, as is the car park. The two bars are utterly dissimilar in character, which makes a welcome change these days, and the landlord, a jovial Welshman, will be familiar to drinkers from Hatfield – he used to keep the town's Hilltop pub. Quite a contrast. The Maiden's Head, by the way, was one of the nine or so pubs owned by the Whitwell Brewery, which ran until about 1885.

Pub of the year

An Ordnance Survey map is your best investment for finding the next pub, the Plough at Ley Green, if you've never been there before. Perhaps the easiest way to get there from Whitwell is to carry on out of the village in the direction you were travelling, and take the first right towards Preston. After a couple of miles turn left at the T junction, and then the second left will be Plough Lane, where lies your target.

A great deal has been written about this tiny, immensely popular cottage pub, Herts North CAMRA branch pub of the year 1979, and suffice it to say here that the Greene King Abbot, IPA and dark mild remain excellent, while both the new landlord and the brewery seem only too keen to keep the Plough exactly as it is.

Tearing yourself away, if you can, carry on up Plough Lane and turn right, straight on for a couple of miles, and you will come to the village of Great Offley. Three years ago not one of Offley's five pubs sold real ale. Happily the scene is now somewhat different.

Entering the village from the south, the first pub you come to is the Red Lion. This former farmhouse specialises in meals and attracts a young clientele which seems predominantly mid-20s, which is presumably why Whitbread's installed a handpump for Wethered's bitter a couple of years ago.

Further up the village the handpump at the Bull – a former Bennett's of Dunstable house – serves Watney's London Bitter by air pressure, alas. However, almost next door is the Crusty Loaf, previously the Cock, which although primarily catering for its restaurant customers can still offer callers a pint of handpumped Adnam's bitter – though at a price.

Across the road is the 16th-century Green Man, which once went under the curious name of the Green Man and Pompey. The handpumps alone are worth seeing – beautiful white, red and gold affairs. The Wethered's bitter, served up by a landlord with many years' experience, is excellent, and in the main bar are some rather nice old J.W. Green's of Luton advertising signs. On a clear day you can see Stevenage from the pub car park – if you really want to.

Turning left at the top of the village, take the old road out to Lilley Bottom, and then turn right across the bridge over the A505 Luton road to Lilley itself. Neither of the two pubs here, both Greene King, sell real ale, so press on to Hexton, some four miles away.

At the crossroads on the B655 Barton-Hitchin road, go straight across past the curious village pump/road sign combined, and about 400 years up on the left you will find the Raven.

The Raven

The pub, built about 1913 by the local Lord of the Manor, is named after nearby Ravensburgh Castle, a Danish hill fort overlooking the Icknield Way. The sign shows the Viking raven flag, and the front of the pub sports a very nice three-D bird.

Unfortunately, when it was built the architect forgot to include any cellars, so all the beer has to come from behind a set of French doors. All the same, the handpumped Wethered's bitter is very pleasant.

Turning back onto the B655 towards Hitchin, the traveller has to make a short journey through an isolated tongue of Bedfordshire which pokes down rather cheekily into our own fair county. In this peninsular is the village of Pegsdon, and while one is unwilling to forgive the people of Beds for anything, Pegsdon's one pub, the Live and Let Live, amply repays a stopoff in this alien territory.

Greene King Abbot, IPA and dark mild are served up in fine condition by electric pump, and the view from the pub garden amply repays the time taken to get there. This is an officially-designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – the Herts portion is the only AOB in the county – and it lives up to its name.

Pirton, the next port of call, is not too easy to get to from Pegsdon, and the simple way – down the B655 and turn left at the crossroads – is the longest. Once in the village, however, all three pubs sell real ale, so the journey is not wasted.

The Fox, a former Lucas of Hitchin pub, now very popular with the motorcycling fraternity, will let you have Wethered's bitter from the handpump. On the green stand the Cat and Fiddle, famous for its ladies' darts team, where you will find Charles Wells Bombardier and bitter.

Finally, on the other side of the green is the Mott and Bailey, previously the White Horse, but named after Pirton's castle by the new owners when it was sold by Whitbread a couple of years ago. Once again, food is a major part of the pub, but a forest of handpumps – perhaps too many – serve Adnam's bitter, Everard's Old Original, and Greene King IPA and Abbot. Thus the north west – not a great variety in the types of beer, except perhaps for Pirton, but a large number of some of the best pubs in the county.

THE BARLEY MOW

VARIETY IS
THE SPICE
OF LIFE



TRY OUR
14 REAL
ALES

TYTTENHANGER GREEN

In addition to our normal range there will always be a cask on the bar from our range of guest beers which could be one of the following: Eldridge Pope, Bourne Valley, Donnington, Arkell, Archers, St Austell or Brakspear's 6X.

It's barbecue season again!

Come and cook for yourself:

Steak 75p, Sausage 12p, Hamburger 20p,
Rolls 12p, Butter 4p, Sauces 6p, Mustard 2p.

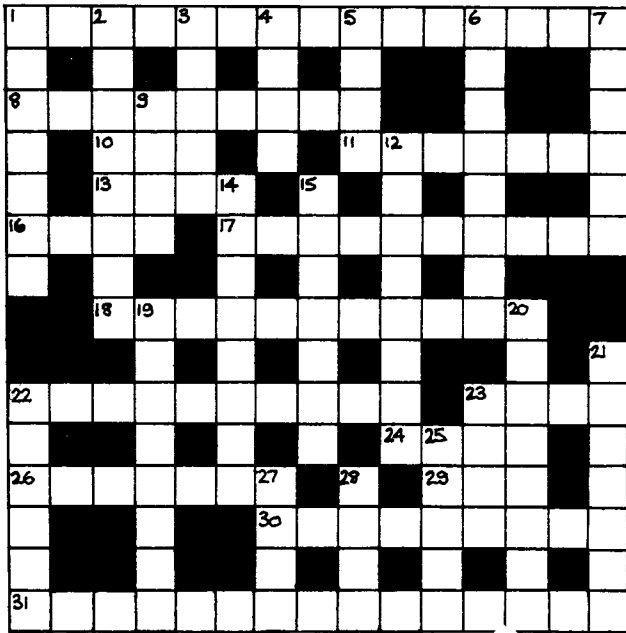
Salt and pepper free!

8.30-10.30 (Mon-Fri eves); 12-2.30 and 8-11 (Sat)

Our aim is to sell the best beer in the county – if ever you are dissatisfied with it we will change it without question.

COMPETITION TIME

10 readers sent in entries for last month's exam question, each giving the correct answer: the 19 gallon barrel. The winner, Frank McNamara of Ware, will be receiving a copy of Beer Naturally by Michael Hardman. This month's crossword will win a copy of the 1981 Good Beer Guide for the first correct entry "out of the hat" received by May 18th.



ACROSS

1. A single journalist and beer producer amongst friends make up this group (6,9)
8. An OG of a hundred? These tum mechanical components (3,6)
10. There's a boat, he exclaimed (3)
11. Sound's like the girl's in a long time - wasting away (7)
13. You also pay at this bar (4)
- 16,4. What we all like to drink. And dance to? (4,4)
17. A spinner's excess? (4,3,3)
18. In practice, rip me off, before I ring you first (11)
22. Call in the agents before tea. It rebounds best (10)
23. A shrub wild about losing a letter (4)
24. Jazzed up cats singing (4)
26. Lies dry about the brewery (7)
29. Tree in a show (3)
30. Stupid weather? (1,5,3)
31. They will enlarge badly for this brewer (8,7)

DOWN

1. A new beer, right on target? (7)
2. Bright beer? (5,3)
3. I hear this woman's alcoholic (5)
4. See 16
5. A girl or an ultimatum? (4)
6. Could describe salt, or a car! (4,4)
7. Good advice for non-CAMRA-members (4,2)
9. Con man's blindfold material? (4)
12. Takes back and rewrites a broadsheet? (8)
14. French wine in the trunk fifty years is treated with affection (8)
15. Confused, 'e prices the ingredients (7)
19. This old mild was on the right track (8)
20. Does this describe a Young's drinker (8)
21. After the good and the bad (3,4)
22. Tolly make an old one (6)
23. Can only certain Spaniards do this on a sunny day? (4)
25. Plants 101 about a law (5)
27. Blows in the wind with one less alias around (4)
28. Anne Hathaway, in part, isn't frigid (4)

BRANCH DIARY

HERTFORDSHIRE SOUTH BRANCH

Monday May 4th

May Day Madness at the White Horse, Burnham Green. The more the merrier! 6pm start (Benskins bitter, Ind Coope Burton Ale and KK)

Tuesday May 12th

Hertford Campaigning Evening and pub survey, meeting at the Dimsdale Arms, Fore Street, 7.45pm. A good turnout is needed to cover all the pubs. (McMullen's Country)

Tuesday May 19th

BRANCH MEETING at the Sportsman, Croxley Green. Guest speaker Peter Bentley, Managing Director of Ind Coope - Benskins. 8.00pm prompt. (Ind Coope Burton Ale, Benskins bitter)

Tuesday May 26th

Darts knockout tournament at the Rose and Crown, Essendon. 8.00pm prompt start please. (Ind Coope East Anglia bitter, KK and Burton Ale)

HERTFORDSHIRE NORTH BRANCH

Wednesday May 6th

BRANCH MEETING at the Plough, Great Munden. 8.00pm. (Rayments, Greene King, Bass)

Wednesday May 13th

Social at the Kings Arms, Bucklersbury, Hitchin. The first social in a new Wethered's outlet. 8.00pm.

Wednesday May 20th

Campaigning social at the Three Horseshoes, Hinxworth. Casks of mild and bitter will be on the bar in this pub which normally sells Greene King top-pressure beers. 8.00pm.

Wednesday June 3rd

BRANCH MEETING at the Marquis of Lorne, Stevenage old town. 8.00pm start. (Greene King)

HERTS-ESSEX BORDERS BRANCH

Tuesday May 12th

All Essex All Mild Social at the Red Lion, Chelmsford. 8.00pm.

Monday May 18th

BRANCH MEETING at the Bell Motel (THF Post House) at Bell Common, Epping. A new outlet for Youngs. 8.00pm start.

Tuesday May 26th

Branch darts match and social at the Coach and Horses, Nazeing. 8.00pm. (Ind Coope)

Saturday May 30th

Beer Tent at Sheering Village Fete (Near Hatfield Heath). Open 2.00pm to 5.30pm. (McMullens beers)

For more details on these meetings and events see the appropriate branch contact on this page.

BRANCH SOCIAL SECRETARIES PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF COPY DATES GIVEN BELOW.

PUB NEWS

A new outlet for Benskins bitter and Ind Coope KK is the **Three Tuns** in St Andrews Street, Hertford. Nearby the **Reindeer** in Port Hill is selling the new Ind Coope East Anglia bitter alongside KK. Just around the corner the **Two Brewers** in Port Vale is selling Bass and Directors bitter with one pump alternating between Mac's Country, Young's bitter and Charrington's IPA.

A list received recently from McMullens showing pubs with handpumps shows a number of (unconfirmed) outlets which include the **Woolpack**, Hertford; the **Angel's Reply**, Hitchin; the **Long Arm and Short Arm**, Lemsford; and the **Blue Anchor** in St Albans. It is possible that if these houses don't already have the pumps installed that the brewery intends to install them shortly. Each outlet, as if we needed to say it, is for handpumped Country Bitter only.

BRANCH CONTACTS

Hertfordshire North Branch Martin Connelly ☎ Hitchin 52907

Hertfordshire South Branch Eric Sim ☎ Hatfield 60647

Herts-Essex Borders Branch Terry Smith ☎ Epping 73677

The Hertfordshire Newsletter is produced by the Hertfordshire South, the Hertfordshire North and the Herts-Essex Borders Branches of the Campaign for Real Ale Limited. The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of CAMRA or its branches. The Editor gratefully receives articles or letters for publication. These should preferably be typewritten and double spaced, handwritten items as legible as possible please. Send to D. Burns, 11 Turpins Chase, Oaklands, Welwyn, Hertfordshire.

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